ADAM ADAMANT IN

# THE MAN WHO DIED TWICE

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THERE was a scream! And then another—and another!... as Adam finished firing his shots at the target on the fairground shooting gallery. Adam laid down his .22 rifle and turned in surprise to Inspector Fallon.

"Inspector . . . " he began, but did not finish, for the Inspector was no longer there.

Adam frowned. Was this the sort of thing that had happened before? Adam had agreed to investigate a mystery concerning a man who had been shot on this very range. His name was James Dillon, and the mystery was whether he had been shot by accident or by intent. If by intent, it was a case of murder. But the police could not be sure.

Still frowning, Adam walked round the shooting gallery.

He soon discovered the reason for the screams. Inspector Dent, Adam's companion, was staring in bewilderment at a fallen man.

"It's impossible!" the Inspector was muttering. "Absolutely impossible!"

"Nothing is impossible, Inspector," said Adam calmly.

"But—but this man is already buried!" gulped Inspector Dent. "We buried him last week! He was shot dead in precisely this same spot. That, Mister Adamant, is why you are here!"

Adam was puzzled. He had no reason to doubt the Inspector's words. It was true that James Dillon was dead and buried. Adam had seen pictures of him, and he started as he saw that this was the same man.

"My dear Inspector!" Even Adam was shaken. "We must think this thing out carefully. You could not possibly have buried the man who has just been shot."

"No, sir," said the Inspector, taking a hold on his frayed nerves. "But this dead man is definitely James Dillon. I recognise him by that scar on his face."

He stared at Adam rather strangely.

"Do you realise, sir," he went on, "that it might have been your shot that killed him? He must have

been passing behind the screen as you fired."

"My goodness!" It was Adam's turn to be startled. "But surely that screen is bullet-proof?"

"No, sir! The screen is only a 'tilt', as these people call it—a piece of canvas behind the targets. The bullets pass through it and are checked by this sandbag wall."

"Indeed!" Adam responded, swinging his swordstick towards the sandbags. "Then why is there this gap between the bags and the screen? Why are the bags not close enough to prevent anybody passing between them and the screen?"

There was the sound of a sudden movement. Somebody on the other side of the 'tilt' was alarmed. A man was running—his steps could be plainly heard. Adam's sword flashed out of its sheath as he raced round the 'tilt' to intercept the running man.

But Inspector Dent was not as quick-thinking as Adam. He chased Adam in alarm.

"Mister Adamant, you must come to the station. Your bullet might have killed that man. I insist, sir, that you . . . Ouch!"

Inspector Dent finished his remarks as he almost turned a somersault. Adam had used the sheath of his sword to trip the Inspector. It was obvious to Adam that the running man was somebody who had heard their remarks and was somehow implicated in the two tragedies. Adam was determined to follow him, despite the Inspector's desire to take Adam to the police station.

Adam left the Inspector in a dazed heap. Racing round the stall, he saw the running man leaping into a car.

In ten seconds flat Adam was in his own car and letting in the clutch. He roared away from the car park barely a hundred yards behind the car taken by the running man. Adam was in pursuit of something more than a man—he was in pursuit of a mystery!

James Dillon was dead and buried! He had been a corpse for over a week. And yet Inspector Dent was certain that James Dillon was the man who had just been shot!

It was not only a case of Adam chasing a suspect. The police were also chasing a suspect —and that suspect was Adam! After all, Inspector Dent had been present when Adam had fired the shots.

"Get after him!" roared the Inspector into the first telephone he found. "He may be making a getaway. Throw a cordon round the whole area."

Adam braked suddenly as the car ahead disappeared. It seemed to have turned left, and Adam swerved into a private drive that led to a large, magnificent house. By the time he had arrived at the front door the car he had been

following was out of sight.

"Odd!" Adam muttered. "But I know the number. And I am certain that it turned into this drive."

Stepping from the car, he rested awhile on his swordstick as he stared at the house. There was something familiar about it.

"That scientist, Professor Gram!" he exclaimed. "The millionaire inventor! Only nobody knows how he made his millions. He must be somehow connected with the man I have followed. And that man," Adam added grimly as he mounted the steps of the porch, "is connected with those two killings—and the theft of over three million pounds worth of bullion!"

That was the truth of the matter—a gigantic robbery. The police had traced it back to James Dillon, but only to find that Dillon was dead! Since then they had called in Adam Adamant, and Adam had been testing the rifles on the shooting range when 'James Dillon' seemed to have died again!

"I must be careful," Adam thought as he rang the bell. "Professor Gram is a Very Important Person!"

The bell rang somewhere in the distance. After a wait of a few seconds, Adam found himself confronted by a man in a dark suit who was obviously a butler.

"Your business, sir?" this man asked austerely.

"To see Professor Gram," said Adam politely. "I think he may be able to help me in a matter I am interested in."

"The Professor is not at home, sir," said the butler, beginning to close the door, but Adam's foot was already against it, making the closing impossible.

"Kindly conduct me to your master," Adam said grimly. "This matter is of the greatest urgency."

The 'butler' showed himself in his true colours. He swung a heavy fist to Adam's jaw. But Adam moved his head neatly aside, at the same time swinging up his swordstick. The man gave a howl as the stick paralysed his wrist, and Adam stepped within and watched him calmly as he clutched his right hand.

"Now, perhaps, you will take me to Professor Gram!"

Sullenly the man preceded Adam along the hall. He threw open the door of a room on the right, but Adam stepped back instead of entering.

"That room is empty," he said politely. "I think the other one contains the Professor. No doubt you were trying to trap me."

So saying, Adam swung open the door on the left. Sure enough, this was the room in which the Professor was standing, and there beside him was the man from the fairground—the running

man that Adam had followed first on foot and then in the car.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen," Adam said, stepping into the room and moving rapidly aside as the 'butler' followed him. "I think we have a serious matter to discuss."

There was a dead silence. Nobody answered. Adam had now unsheathed his sword and was facing all three of them. The 'butler', still clutching his wrist and glaring, had entered and slammed the door behind him, while Professor Gram and the showman had turned to face Adam.

The game was up and they knew it. Professor Gram leaned with one hand on his desk as Adam stepped back a pace.

"Adam Adamant," he said, "I know you are after us. And you may as well know the truth. That stolen gold is stacked safely away in this house, and it will not be long now before we get it out of the country."

"But why do I tell you all this?" He leaned further over his desk. Adam swung his swordstick on guard. "It is because you will not live to repeat it. You may as well know how James Dillon died twice. The first time it was his double, because the police were too close to him. The second time it was himself, because you were called in to solve the mystery."

"Are you satisfied, Adamant?" asked the Professor.

Adam had no chance to reply. A trap-door under his feet opened as the Professor pressed a button on his desk. The three crooks had cunningly manoeuvred Adam on to it by moving towards him and causing him to step back.

For a split second he was falling through space. Then he landed with a crash, and the darkness of the cellar into which he had fallen became even darker as he lost consciousness.

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Adam had no idea how long he had been unconscious. It was pitch dark. But he was awake now, with pains in his legs and head. A heavy door in the wall opened, and somebody entered with some food and drink on a tray. He set this down beside Adam, then departed silently.

Adam was surprised to find that he was not bound. He was free to move about in the cellar. But the walls were of stone, and the door by which the man had entered was of solid oak.

"Bolted thoroughly on the outside," he muttered.

There was little light, but Adam's eyes were becoming accustomed to the gloom. He looked at the tray of food and drink. And something seemed to tell him to beware.

Why should these villains give him food or drink when they obviously intended to kill him!

Had that not been their intention, the Professor would never have admitted to murder! For no murderer can allow another to know of his misdeeds.

A scraping sound suddenly attracted Adam's attention. He turned swiftly, feeling for his swordstick which had descended with him, then realised that it was only a rat that had made the scraping sound.

The rat was emerging cautiously from a hole in the stone wall near the floor. Adam smiled, then, stooping suddenly, found his sword and pushed the tray of food towards the rat.

"Eat, my friend," he said softly. "For this food must disappear. And you are a friend indeed if you will do so."

The rat pounced on the tray. It wolfed a hunk of meat and started licking its lips. Then it started to gulp. Its movements became feeble, then convulsive, and very soon it was stretched out in the throes of death.

"Poisoned!" Adam said softly. "So that's how they intended to get rid of me. Let them have their way. If they expect a corpse, let them have one. I will be their third victim."

Adam pulled his cloak over him, laid his sword, unsheathed, beside him. Then he closed his eyes, listening for the slightest movement.

A key turned in the lock of the heavy oaken door, and a torch flashed round the cellar. Adam did not allow even his eyelids to flicker. The three men who had menaced him in the room above entered and stared at him.

"It has worked," said the voice of Professor Gram. "He has eaten the meat. He has been dead at least five minutes."

"What do we do now then?" asked the voice of the 'butler'.

"He will go with us on our plane. And when we are far enough out to sea, he will go overboard with enough weight to sink him to the deepest depths."

The Professor turned as he spoke, leaving the cellar. But Adam suddenly shot out his hands and seized the Professor's feet, giving a jerk that turned the man almost upside down.

He dealt the astounded 'butler' such a blow on the jaw that the latter joined the Professor on the floor. Only the showman was left, and Adam used a judo trick to put this one out of action.

Adam then seized his stick.

"So we are going in a plane, are we?" he said pleasantly. "No doubt you have accomplices, for I have not heard that any of you are experienced pilots. Perhaps the gold is already on its way."

Adam was right. Other members of the gang were already loading gold into a lorry as Adam raced up the stone steps from the cellar, slamming

and bolting the heavy door behind him. There were two of them, and they turned casually as they heard Adam's footsteps.

Adam did not bother to attack the men. They were too startled to be any trouble, anyway. Instead, he thrust his sword into the tyres of the vehicle, puncturing them so thoroughly that the van seemed to sink six inches.

At that the two men yelled in fury. They closed in on Adam, one of them drawing a gun. But Adam was used to that sort of thing, and he whisked the gun from the man's hand with his sword. The man gasped and stared in bewilderment as blood trickled through his fingers.

"Now you, sir!" Adam snapped, turning on the other. "Are you coming quietly, or do I pinion you to the van?"

"Leave off, guv!" The man spread his arms in horror. "I ain't done nuthin'. I only come here to load a van."

"Then stay where you are," Adam snapped at him. "For I hear a police car approaching."

Adam was right. Inspector Dent had at last traced the route that Adam had taken. As he leaped from the car that had roared up the drive, he stared grimly at Adam and the two members of the Professor's gang.

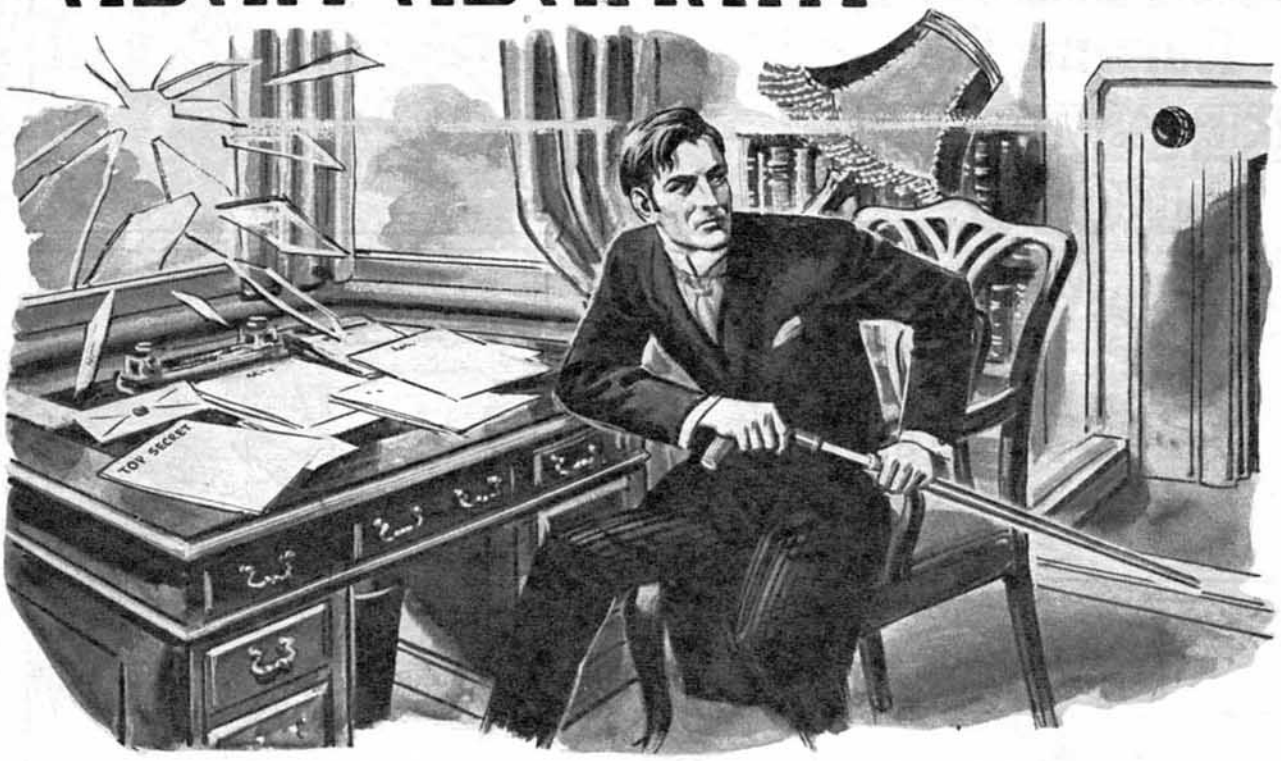
"My friend," Adam said politely, "I must apologise for running out on you at the fairground. I am sincerely sorry that I had to trip you when you tried to follow me. But my ideas were not your ideas, and I trust I have solved this mystery to your satisfaction."

Inspector Dent wanted a lot more information, of course: in fact, he was not really satisfied until Adam had conducted him down to the cellar where three dazed men were still trying to figure out what had happened.

They had worked out such a marvellous plan —in their own opinion—that they could not understand how it had gone wrong. They had got rid of the only member of their gang of whom the police had any knowledge—James Dillon—and they thought they had got rid of Adam.

"I think you will find, Inspector," Adam said, "that it was Dillon himself who murdered his double. He hoped this would throw you off the trail, not realising that you would call me in on a murder investigation. And then it was that showman who got rid of Dillon, trying to place the blame on me. As I have said before," Adam continued pleasantly, "I am sorry to have tripped you up in the mud, but the mud that is stirred up in any kind of crime is inevitable. I hope you forgive me, sir . . . Thank you . . ."

# ADAM ADAMANT LIVES




IT seemed to Adam that a bomb had exploded. One moment he had been sitting peacefully at his desk, reading through some important government papers; the next, the window of his library burst inwards, something rattled from wall to wall, smashing vases and other objects, and the whole room was in disorder.

Adam's reaction was swift. Before the confusion had come to an end he was on his feet, sword unsheathed and ready for anything.

But nothing further took place. The room was quiet.

He pressed the bell-push with the point of his gleaming sword. In a few seconds his manservant, James, entered, and stood in his usual attitude within the library.

"You rang, sir?"

"I did, James—and not without reason. Can you tell me what fiendish plot is being hatched against me at this moment?"

James gave no hint of surprise. Plots against Adam were so frequent that he did not even raise an eyebrow.

"I am sorry, sir, I know of nothing at the moment. But this room, sir, seems somewhat in disorder."

Adam smiled cynically.

"How right you are, James. The window has been smashed, that Ming vase on the mantelpiece is in a thousand pieces and I felt the whistle of some lethal object past my ear. I feel lucky to be alive!"

James appeared to glide round the room. He bent suddenly and picked up a small round object. Adam was on guard instantly, but, as James spoke, he lowered his swordstick.

"I am afraid, sir," James said, "it is only a cricket ball."

Adam sheathed his sword, laughed quietly to himself and held out his hand for the ball.

"How foolish of me, James. It is these important papers that have put my nerves on edge. If a foreign power obtains access to them, this country will be in grave danger. I promised the Minister that I would guard them with my life. But—cricket! My dear James! Often I have knocked a sixer into the Dean's study. It is as simple as that."

Taking the cricket ball, Adam turned it over and over in his hands, and in his mind were the memories of those happy days of his youth. In Adam's opinion, cricket had never been cricket since those days.

"You may go, James. I will solve this mystery myself."

As James departed, Adam gathered the papers together from his day's work and pressed a button on the wall. This caused a picture to slide aside, disclosing the door of an armoured steel wall safe. In a few moments Adam had inserted the papers and closed the door, sliding the picture back into position with another press of the button.

Adam felt he had earned a break. He had already formed the opinion on the papers that the Minister required of him, and it was a lovely day for cricket. With cloak and stick he went out to his car, determined to find the mighty hitter who had sent that ball unintentionally through the window of his library.

Adam drove carefully. He was astonished at the distance he had to travel before he found the village cricket pitch. As he stopped his car, he beamed at the happy scene.

This was England, the England he loved. There was the sun on the green, the players in their white flannels. The young man at the wicket was leaning on his bat, and, as Adam climbed out, another young man came running past him with a new ball.

"Pardon me," said Adam, "but is this what you have been looking for?" And Adam showed him the ball that had burst so violently into his library.

The youngster was confused.

"Sir, it is! I recognise it because of the split in it. I hope it has not done any damage, sir."

"Not at all." Adam spoke happily. "It has smashed my window, destroyed a valuable Ming vase, startled me almost out of my wits and probably cost me at least a hundred pounds. But that is nothing."

To Adam, cricket was the greatest game in the world, and he shook hands warmly with this batsman who had driven the ball completely out of sight.

"You will go places, George," Adam told him. "It is a pleasure to meet you. Are you practising, or is this a friendly game with some team from another village?"

"It's a practice game, sir," George, a tall young fellow with a friendly grin, told him.

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"But we have a real one on this afternoon. It's the annual match between Little Medbury and Grimchurch, our ancient rivals, which we always play for charity."

"Then I am undoubtedly a Little Medbury fan," said Adam. "For Little Medbury is the village I love. I beg you, George, show me how you made such a mighty hit this morning."

George was flattered, and Adam, having established friendly relations with the village team, settled down to watch their practice game with the reserves. Indeed, he did more, for, when George had finished his stand at the wicket, Adam agreed to join in the match that afternoon.

"We would be honoured, sir," George told him. "And we will, of course, pay for the damage that my hitting has done to your library."

"You will do nothing of the sort," said Adam, smiling. "I will pay for that myself. It is my contribution to the charity for which you are playing this game. I will be honoured myself to take part in it."

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Adam drove home to lunch in a happy frame of mind. After what he had heard about commercial cricket these days, he was delighted to find that simple enthusiasm for the game still existed. He left his car at the door of his house and sprang nimbly up the steps to let himself in with his key.

Having opened the door, however, Adam paused. There was a strange feeling about the house. It was uncannily silent. Once again Adam was on guard. Softly he went to the door of the library and pushed it quietly open.

He was not mistaken. Instead of finding the room in order, the damage cleared up by James as expected, the room was in a far worse state than before. It seemed to have suffered a tornado. The curtains were torn, the picture on the wall had been slid back, and the door of the wall safe was hanging from its hinges. Black marks around it showed that it had been blown open with some form of explosive.

As Adam stepped swiftly towards it, he almost stumbled over the figure of James, who was lying flat out on the floor. Adam stepped across him, glanced briefly into the empty safe, then set about reviving his manservant, who seemed to be stunned.

"The papers, James!" he said urgently, as the latter showed signs of recovery. "The papers! What happened after I left? Don't tell me this was another cricket ball!"

"No, sir," said James, as Adam raised him to a sitting position. "I beg your pardon, sir, but—but this was a cricket bat. I was struck rather forcibly on the head with it, sir."

Adam stared grimly at the bat James pointed to on the library floor.

He rose to his feet, his mind in a whirl. Could those young men on the cricket field be involved in this crime? Adam could not believe it. And yet the ball through his window had been the cause of his leaving the library so that someone could enter and steal the papers.

"Tell me, James, did you get any view of these people before you were struck?"

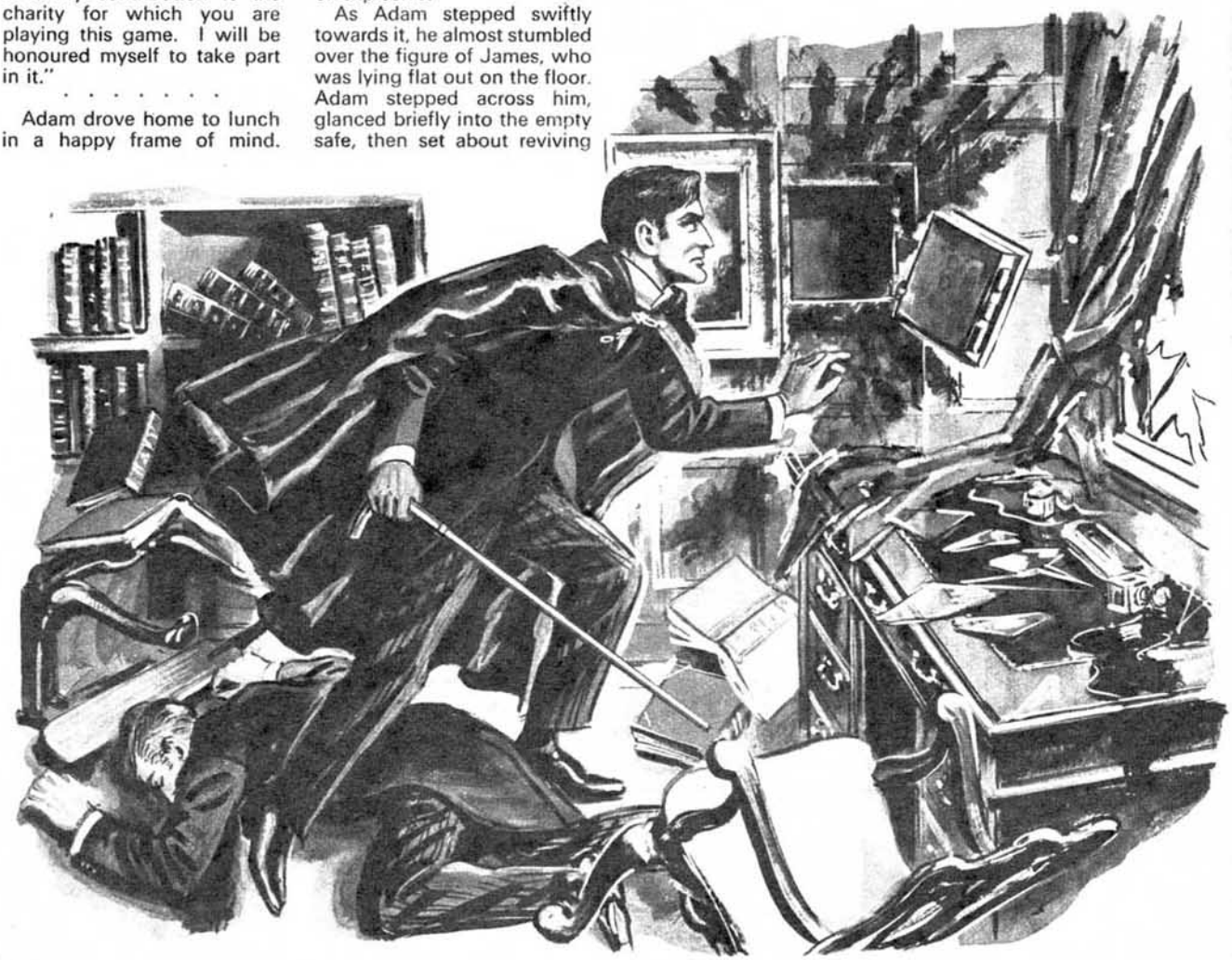
"Only the briefest glimpse, sir. They wore stocking masks. But one mask I noticed had a split in it at the side, and it had an ear protruding. It was a very flat ear, sir, and the lobe of it was missing."

Adam stepped swiftly to the phone. The robbery had to be reported to the local police. That was ordinary routine. But Adam was not really interested in routine. Having made his report, he turned again to James.

"You say this fellow had the lobe of one ear missing. You saw this because that ear was protruding through a slit in the stocking mask. Can you say which ear this was?"

James screwed up his face in an effort of concentration. For a few moments he looked puzzled. Then, suddenly, his face cleared.

"Yes, sir. He was a left-handed batsman. His right



hand on the bat was above his left. And, as I swung round, sir, I know that it was his left ear that had suffered this minor damage."

"Thank you, James."

Adam went swiftly back to his car. He had no interest in police investigations. James would deal with the police himself when they arrived. Adam's job was to find the missing papers.

Adam had no doubt that, at the moment, they were in very wrong hands. This job had been planned, and planned very cunningly. For, had anything like a bomb been thrown, Adam would have been thoroughly on guard.

But a cricket ball through his window! It was such a simple thing, the sort of thing that Adam would overlook as simply the luck of the game. He had been deceived. And Adam was out to find the deceivers.

He looked at his watch. In a few minutes the game between Little Medbury and Grimchurch would be taking place. The robbery had spoiled Adam's lunch, but he was not even thinking about it. What he was thinking was that somewhere among those apparently honest cricketers there was a plotter who had arranged the whole episode.

"And when I find him," Adam said to himself, "he will have more than the lobe of an ear missing. Yes, by the Great Lord Harry! He will learn of my displeasure! To be the agent of a foreign power—that is one thing. But to besmirch the name of cricket for his evil purpose . . . ah!"

. . . . . .

It was a grim line-up. White-faced and shaken, the Little Medbury cricket team stood before Adam in the pavilion. George was particularly shaken. Adam had his swordstick as he pointed from one to the other.

"No, sir," said George. "I know nothing about it."

"But it was you, surely, who hit that ball through my window?"

Adam was trying to get at the bottom of the mystery.

George licked dry lips.

"I'm certainly a hitter, sir. I've always been one. But I didn't do anything on purpose."

Adam gazed sadly at the young man. Such a fine hitter, and yet—and yet—could he possibly be one of the crooks?

"I think, sir," said the captain of the team, a man named Gregory, "you are on the wrong track. We know nothing of any plot. This morning, at practice, we simply lost a ball."

"And you say that this split ball is the one you lost?"

Adam was quick to seize on the point. Gregory assured him that it was.

Adam let his gaze travel over the shaken young men. He saw that George was whiter than ever.

"George," he said sadly, "I hoped that you would be famous some day in this great game. I still hope so. Have you anything further to tell me?"

George looked as though he were going to faint. His friends grabbed him, however, and led him away. Adam let them go, for something else had attracted his attention.

Although the Little Medbury club was only a village team, they employed a paid steward, and, at that moment, the steward came into the pavilion. He was bringing in some stumps that he placed in a corner. Adam swung round on him and checked his departure by holding his swordstick across his chest.

"Just a moment," he said. "You others may go."

When they had gone Adam gazed fixedly at the steward.

"Your name, please."

"Maroc, sir."

"And how did you suffer that injury to your left ear?"

"I don't understand, sir."

"You understand very well, I think. The lobe is missing."

What happened next was so swift that, had Adam not been prepared, he might have been taken at a disadvantage. Maroc dived for a gun in his hip pocket but Adam, sword unsheathed, pinned his arm to the wall by thrusting the point through his sleeve. Even then

the fight was not over, for Maroc twisted out of his jacket and went for Adam like a judo expert.

Adam was equal to the situation. He had Maroc in a grip of his own that the crook could not get out of, and there followed a few moments of writhing until Maroc suddenly clenched his teeth.

"Ah! Why did I not realise he was prepared."

Adam was disgusted. Maroc had clamped his teeth on a capsule held in his mouth and, with his eyes turning glassy, he sank limply to the floor in Adam's hold.

"Not dead!" Adam said bitterly. "But he might as well be." He felt Maroc's pulse. "He was holding a tablet to make him unconscious so that I could not question him."

Leaving the steward where he had fallen, Adam hurried from the pavilion, and once again he was halted by the game in progress. Little Medbury had won the toss and were going in first. Quite a crowd had collected, for the annual charity match between the two villages was very popular, and Adam hesitated to spoil a game of cricket.

"We'll finish our game first," he said to himself, "and beat the villains yet."

Calmly, Adam stood on the steps of the pavilion watching the game. Very shortly he would be called upon to bat himself as he had promised that morning. He realised suddenly that he had not brought any equipment, and swung round swiftly and re-entered the pavilion.

A phone call to James soon settled that problem, after which Adam stared again at the figure of Maroc on the floor.

"I'd better put him out of sight," he thought, and raised the unconscious man to his full height and pushed him into one of the tall lockers.

"That will do for you," he said, as he slammed the self-locking door.

Adam was now satisfied that the clue to the mystery lay somewhere in the Little Medbury Cricket Club. He wished it could be otherwise, but was determined to discover the stolen papers. As one of the reserve team entered, Adam questioned him carefully.

"That steward, Maroc," he said. "Has he been here long?"

"No, Mister Adamant, only a few weeks. He came with good references, and we engaged him for the season. I hope he hasn't been annoying you?"

"Not at all," said Adam, smiling grimly to himself. "He has ways I don't like, but we need not go into details. Tell me, has he any friends round here?"

"Oh yes, two of them. He brought them in himself. One rolls the pitch for us, the other is the best bowler of the Grimchurch team."

"Thank you, sir," said Adam. "You have been most helpful."

He went out again to watch the game. Little Medbury had lost two wickets, but were knocking up quite a score. As Adam looked on, James arrived with his cricketing togs.

"These were all I could find, sir," he said apologetically. "They seem to have been in the wardrobe since 1902, sir."

"Excellent!" said Adam. "Just what I wanted."

"Will that be all, sir?"

"No, James. Hang around for a bit, and keep your eyes open."

A sudden thought occurred to Adam. George, the hard-hitter, had been very nervous. George's hit that morning had been an impossible one. As Adam stared at the distant towers of his own home, he knew that George could not possibly have knocked a ball that far.

"So!" he said to himself. "The mystery deepens."

George was still batting. At that moment, however, the Grimchurch bowler sent down a googly and George missed it. He was out middle stump.

"Hard luck, George," said Adam, as the discomfited young fellow walked back to the pavilion. "Better luck next time."

George paused uneasily with his bat over his shoulder.

"Sir," he said, "I have a confession to make."

"Indeed, George. I hope it is nothing to the dishonour of the game?"

"No, Mr. Adamant. But that hit I made this morning—I was conned into it, sir."

Adam was bewildered. He did not know that "conned" was the expression for the confidence trick.

"Conned, George?"

"Yes, sir. Somebody dared me to knock the cover off the

ball. I knocked it right out of sight."

"Ah! And who, if I may ask, was this somebody?"

"It's the chap who's just bowled me, sir."

Adam patted George on the shoulder with his swordstick. It was a light touch, as though he were giving George a knighthood.

"Good man," he said. "You have given me the clue."

There was a shout then for Adam. The batsman who had followed George was also out, and it was Adam's turn at the wicket. With a gleam in his eye, Adam changed rapidly into the clothes that James had brought him, and very soon he walked to the wicket swinging his bat.

Gasps arose from the spectators. For Adam's cricket togs were way out of fashion. They were the clothes of his early youth, consisting of white flannels, cummerbund in colours and giant pads.

But Adam did not mind. In his brain there was a problem, and the problem was—how could an innocent young man like George, a splendid batsman, have been made to appear to knock a ball nearly half-a-mile?

Adam felt he knew the answer already. As he took his stance at the wicket, he stared thoughtfully at the bowler at the other end of the pitch. This was the man who had dared George to knock the ball through his window that morning!

. . . . . .

Wham!

The first ball Adam received nearly knocked the bat out of his hands. It was a stinger. He managed to turn it aside, but could not make a run. The next one was even worse, for it came as a throw, like a cannon-ball.

Adam was convinced that he had found the answer to the mystery.

"This man," he said to himself, "is no bowler. He is a thrower. And that's the chap that could throw a ball through my window like a bomb."

As Adam thought these thoughts, the third ball came down to him. It was a bumper, very nearly bouncing above his head. At the last moment Adam raised his bat and tipped it, after which, in the view of the spectators, he started to make a run.

But Adam was not making runs! He was after that so-called bowler! And the bowler knew it. As Adam ran towards him, so did the bowler run away from Adam, for he had sensed that Adam had discovered the plan.

Maroc had been missing for nearly half-an-hour! And Maroc should have shown up to give him the signal that all was well!

There followed a most surprising scene on a cricket ground. Not only was the batsman running, but the bowler was running as well. His name, as Adam afterwards discovered, was Groner, a friend of Maroc.

Groner ran like the wind. Some sixth sense had warned him that the game—his "game"—was up. But still he ran. He ran towards the fence that divided the cricket pitch from the field of a farmer next door, his intention simply being to get out of Adam's reach.

"He's got the papers on him," Adam muttered to himself. "That's the fellow I want."

But Groner had a better idea than simply running. In the next field was a bull who was not feeling at all friendly towards the cricketers. He belonged to the farmer who owned both fields, and he was annoyed because he had been turned out that morning from the field on which the pitch had been rolled and put into one where he did not feel at home.

He lowered his head and pawed the ground as Groner ran towards the fence. Swerving suddenly, Groner went for the gate instead, which he pulled open so that the bull could get out. Then he ran on, the startled bull blinking from Adam, who was behind, to Groner, who was in front.

Groner's plan worked well. The bull decided that Adam was the cause of all this, and he lowered his head and charged.

Adam was startled. He leaped aside from the animal's first charge, swinging his bat to give the bull a thump as it went by.

This was the worst thing he could have done. The thump merely irritated the animal, who spun almost in its own length and came at him again.

Adam prepared to defend himself like a toreador.

Thump!

Once again he whacked the bull as he leaped aside, hoping to put it off, but the bull became madder than ever. It pawed the ground and uttered a bellow of rage. Then, lowering its head and swinging its horns in a figure-of-eight movement, it charged for the third time.

Adam felt that something really serious must be done this time. All he had with which to defend himself was the cricket bat, but Adam was an expert with the use of this. As the tossing horns approached him, he raised the bat and brought it down with all his force on the point of one of them.

The bull sank to its knees. It also seemed to cross its eyes. It was obviously dazed by the blow. Adam seized his opportunity and ran swiftly in pursuit of the departing Groner.

It had been merely a guess on Adam's part that Groner had the papers, and in this guess Adam was slightly mistaken. But Groner unerringly led him to the man who really had them, for the latter was sitting in a car beyond the field. Adam was in time to see Groner leap in beside him and the car start off with both of them inside.

Adam looked round wildly. On foot, he could not chase a speeding car. The road wound round both fields and back again as in the fashion of country roads.

Suddenly, Adam realized that the bull was after him again. He was caught between two fires. The car with the crooks was getting away from him, the bull was after him to even up the score.

But Adam thought swiftly. As the animal charged, he leaped aside and performed in the manner of an expert rodeo rider. He seized the animal's horns and swung himself on to its back. Thus, what followed was the exciting scene of Adam riding a wild bull across a farmer's field.

He was going in the right direction, too. The road the car was following bent right round the field, and Adam managed to steer the frightened animal so that it charged frantically through the hedge

bordering the road.

Cr-r-r-r-rash!

There was a loud squeal of brakes. The car with the crooks in it had almost run into the ditch. The bull, with Adam still on its back, had charged out in front of it, and the driver had chosen what he thought was the less of two evils. If he hit the bull he would ruin his car and ruin his getaway; if he went for the opposite hedge, he might have a chance to get by.

But this was not the case. Instead of reaching the hedge, he went deep down into the ditch, and the bull went after him because it was prepared to attack anything in sight. It did not like the weight of Adam on its back.

This meant that the animal, weighing at least half-a-ton, went slap into the car and almost flattened it.

Adam leaped from the animal's back. He knew what could happen in a car accident. The petrol could ignite and cause a fire, if not an explosion. In a second he had pulled open the car door, and was hauling both the occupants out into the road. As he did so, he did not forget his main object, and he went swiftly over them for the papers he felt sure they had stolen.

He was not mistaken. The driver of the car had a briefcase beside him, and in this Adam found what he was looking for.

As far as Adam was concerned, this was the end of the chase, but the bull had other ideas. Pawing the ground again, he lowered his head and charged the two crooks with tossing horns.

This was unfortunate for the crooks. They were not as skilful as Adam at fending him off, and they certainly did not know how to ride him. Instead, they flew through the air and over the fence into yet another field.

Adam was very cheerful. When a police car came roaring up, he was pushing the papers he had recovered into his pocket.

"Ah, inspector!" he said. "I see you have arrived in time."

"I hope so, sir," said Inspector Braun. "We have visited your house and taken down all details from James, but we still have to hear the whole story."

"The story is very simple, Inspector," said Adam, smiling. "It was a cunning plot, but it failed. Had these people thrown a bomb at me, I should have been warned. But when it was merely a cricket ball, I was taken off my guard. I thought it was simply a magnificent six-hit by a member of the local team. You understand?"

"I understand, sir."

"But, of course, it was nothing of the sort. I realised that later. No ordinary man could knock a ball that far. The spies had encouraged a decent young fellow to hit the ball in their direction right out of sight. They were hiding behind a hedge, and, when the ball came to them, one of their number seized it and threw it with all his might through my window."

"We have seen the damage, sir."

"The real damage was that it gave me the wrong idea, and I was not prepared for the villainy that followed. However, I have recovered these documents, and I think you will have no difficulty in capturing those men."

"They are already captured, sir," said the Inspector. "Your man, James, seems to have done it on his own."

"James!" exclaimed Adam. "How do you mean?"

"Begging your pardon, sir," said James, appearing at that moment, "I had to do it. They used a bat and a ball, sir, disgracing the name of cricket, and I felt the insult had to be avenged."

"But how, James?"

"With this, sir," said James, waving a cricket stump. "They tried to run, after the bull had tossed them, so I hit them on the head with it. In fact, sir, I think I stumped them."

"I am glad, James, to find that cricket is still cricket," said Adam in reply, "and the law is still the law."